

A stylized teal graphic resembling a rocket plume or a bird in flight, positioned on the right side of the slide. It features a central vertical shaft with a curved, flame-like top and a tail section with three distinct, curved segments.

ROCKET

**Introduction to
Conflict Transformation**

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Agenda

- Why Do I Need Conflict Transformation Skills?
- Introduction to Conflict Transformation
- Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Why Do I Need Conflict Transformation Skills?

- Humans are constantly in **various states of conflict**, whether obvious or under the surface.
- **Working in groups**, conflicts will emerge. Conflict is part of the **normal stages of group development** (Tuckman 1965).
- **How we handle conflict can determine the course of our lives:**
 - Personal relationships, work dynamics, success in life
 - Toxicity in groups is directly related to the member's relative skill at addressing conflict effectively.

Introduction to Conflict Transformation

- Peace studies scholar **John Paul Lederach (2014)** investigates **conflict transformation**
 - A paradigm **viewing conflict situations** as as **opportunities** to collaboratively **envision positive futures**.
- Conflicts can be **destructive**, i.e., cause harm or contain dynamics that make it difficult for people to get their basic needs met
- Conflict transformation aims to **shift our orientation toward conflict** in order to address the underlying factors in constructive ways
- Conflict transformation skills **take practice** to learn throughout our lifetime.

Conflict Transformation 1

- Conflict transformation involves **processes occurring at the same time** that address the complexity of these issues on an ongoing basis
- For example, if addressing an issue related to unhoused groups, conflict transformation might envision:
 - **Short-term strategies**, e.g., finding adequate food and shelter for unhoused people in a community; as well as
 - **Long-term strategies**, for example addressing intergenerational poverty by making home buying accessible to all members of society.

Conflict Transformation 2

- Conflict transformation differs as an orientation from:
 - **Conflict management:** Strategies that aim to de-escalate or minimize conflicts (Cahn and Abigail 2014)
 - **Conflict resolution:** Strategies that aim to end or “solve” conflicts
- While these approaches are **appropriate in certain situations**, they tend to view conflict as a **problem to be fixed** rather than an **opportunity for growth**.

Conflict Transformation 3

Transformation as a process or series of processes that lead to growth.

- Rather than a linear process, John Paul Lederach (2014) views **change as a circle**, where things **move forward, hit a wall, move backward, collapse, and then move forward again.**

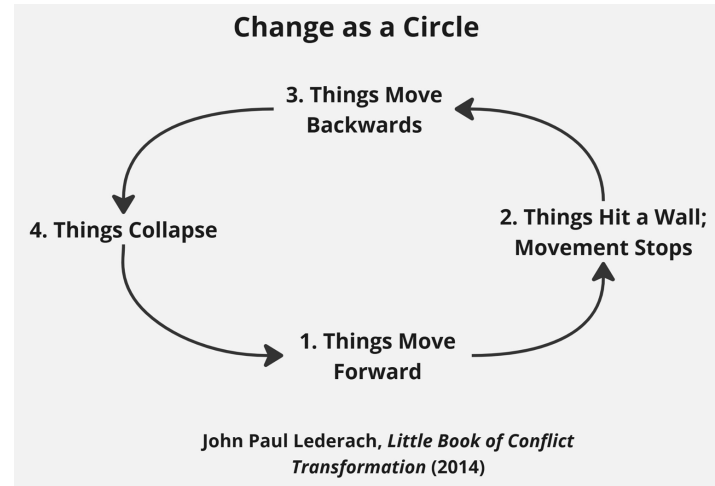
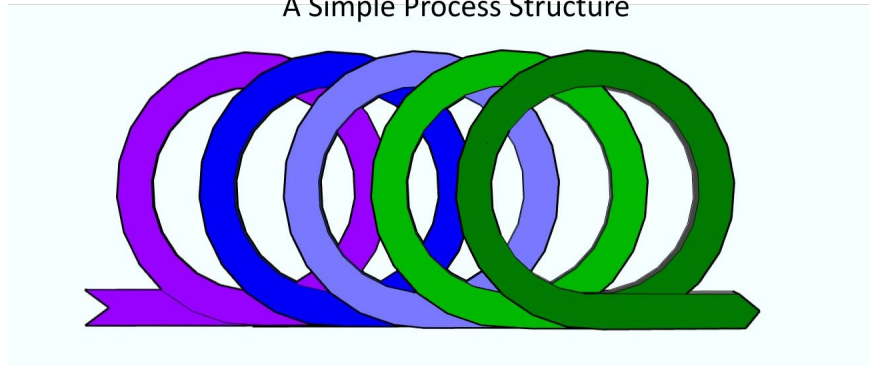


Image adapted from Lederach (2014) by Sarah Lynne Bowman and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas.

Conflict Transformation 4

- Similarly, Lederach emphasizes **change not as one event**, but as a **series of change processes** that require **many strategies** to address **complexity of the conflict**
- These strategies are envisioned as a **spiral** containing a “**web of dynamic circles that create. . . momentum and direction**” (Lederach 2014)



Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (2014)

Image adapted from Lederach (2014) by Sarah Lynne Bowman and Kjell Hedgard Hugaas.

Conflict Transformation 5

- This approach allows us to **embrace our need for linearity** and forward movement, but also the “**feedback loops**” and **iterations** that are necessarily “**associated with circularity**” (Lederach 2014)
- Encourages us to integrate “**yes, and...**” thinking
- Relevant to **game design, playfulness, learning,** and other human processes

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 1

- **Conflict transformation** often involves:
 - **Ongoing dialogue and collaboration** between members in a conflict situation,
 - **Respect for differences in individual subjective experiences,**
 - A commitment from all parties to **ongoing constructive change,**
 - **Co-creating methods** for addressing issues, including **innovating new strategies**
 - **Patience to trust the process,** which is **long-term.**
- These factors are especially important when **addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion,** which are often **deeply entrenched within societies**

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 2

- **Conflict is at the heart of issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion**
- While the **circumstances and contexts differ**, studying conflict on a basic level can help us understand **what lies at the root of diversity-based inequities**
- For example, people experiencing **poverty** in different cultures **around the world** live within **distinct cultural contexts, economic, and environmental pressures**
- At the same time, these **difficulties are all related to basic human needs** (Glasser 1998), such as the need for **security and safety**.
- Being able to **identify the core aspects underlying conflict** can help us **recognize the shared humanity in one another**, even if our lived experiences are different.

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 3

- Conflict transformation arises from Peace and Conflict Studies
- Peace and Conflict Studies distinguishes between:
 - **Negative peace**, when a community has an absence of visible violence, and
 - **Positive peace**, when all basic needs of every community member are met (Addams 1907; Galtung 1969).

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 4

- Conflict management and resolution can contribute to negative peace, meaning the conflict becomes less escalated or visible
- However, they often fail to address positive peace, which requires a deeper and more intensive approach
- Positive peace requires **attention to underlying identities, social dynamics, and cultural contexts**
 - E.g., working to address intergenerational poverty in the long-term, meeting the basic needs of individuals in poverty in the short-term

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 5

- Marginalized members of society are often the target of:
 - **Direct violence:** Physical, emotional, or spiritual harm, such as abuse and neglect (Galtung 1969);
 - **Structural violence:** Harm toward marginalized groups embedded in inequitable laws, institutions, or other structures in society (Galtung 1969); and
 - **Cultural violence:** Harmful beliefs and practices that permeate society on a cultural level (Galtung 1990).

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 6

- These external factors are often internalized by people, which affects one's actions and beliefs about oneself, causing these inequities to persist, e.g., **symbolic violence** (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), including:
 - People who are beneficiaries of privilege, and
 - People who are targets of marginalization.

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 7

Conflict transformation can help us **identify**:

- Norms around engaging with conflicts in various settings and cultural contexts
- The layers of conflict, some of which more visible than others, e.g.,
 - **Positions:** What a person says they want to happen or believes (Fisher and Ury 1981)
 - **Interests:** Why they want it to happen or what is personally at stake in this belief (Fisher and Ury 1981)
 - **Feelings:** How the topic makes them feel, which can affect behavior, judgment, and the stakes of the situation
 - **Needs:** The basic human needs underlying the topic, which transcend specific situations but also inform how we engage with them
 - E.g., power, fun, safety/security, freedom, and love/belonging (Glasser 1998)

Conflict Transformation and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion 8

Conflict transformation can help us **practice**:

- Possible strategies for engaging with conflict,
 - e.g., **conflict styles** (Thomas and Kilmann 1974);
- Methods for engaging in **reflective listening** to improve mutual understanding;
- Methods of **perception checking**, that help us understand how a conflict is viewed from each person's unique worldview (Froemling, Grice, and Skinner 2011);
- Methods of using **communicating our positions, interests, feelings, and needs nonviolently**, e.g., using I-statements without conveying judgment or blame (Rosenberg 2015; Ohio Commission 2000); and
- Approaches for **self-advocating, making requests, and negotiating win-win outcomes**.

Conclusion

- Learning how to transform conflict is **in all of our best interests**
- **Practicing communication skills** can help us engage in **short-term and long-term change processes**
- Conflict transformation can help us find **win-win approaches through collaborative and co-creative strategies**
- Conflict transformation can be **especially helpful in situations related to diversity, equity, and inclusion**
- **Practicing skills** that develop constructive ways of engaging with conflict is a **worthy life-long investment.**

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Thanks!

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